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# Statement submitted by High Atlas Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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## Statement

One critical sustainable development goal is the strengthening of the means by which nations can implement the overall sustainable development global vision. Is there proven methodology that nations can consider and adopt in this regard, even as the challenges and opportunities that they face are as diverse as humanity itself?

We suggest four specific factors that are applicable in this case:

(a) First, we know from decades of global project development evaluations that people's participation from design to evaluation is the primary factor determining whether sustainability will be achieved. In order to promote effective community participation, an administrative system that is decentralized will empower local populations to make decisions and assume responsibility for implementing the social change that they seek.

(b) A second necessary measure at the national level is capacity building among stakeholders to advance projects that achieve the development goals. Specifically, there is a critical role to be performed by facilitators of local community meetings and dialogue in order to promote participation. Trained facilitators help to ensure that all voices are represented and heard. Further, they are aware of pre-existing power relationships and how to navigate these so as to guide a development process in a manner that is broad-based and just.

(c) Third, it would be helpful if measures for sustainable implementation were described in culturally relative terms. For example, in Islam, shura is the concept of participation and consultation; ummah is the global integration of individuals and groups with rights to solidarities and part of humanity as a whole (decentralization); baya in Islamic tradition holds leaders accountable; and tawhidi society is one that recognizes the indivisibility of mankind. Having participation and decentralization explained in Islamic, rather than Western terms would allow Muslim people to see their own outlook and values fully present and incorporated in the steps needed to implement the goals.

(d) Finally, policy development embarked upon by nations in order to achieve the goals, occurs sustainably and most suitably as local participatory processes unfold and light is shed naturally upon policy opportunities that promote sustainable development. People's participation in a sense tests the social system. In this way, for example, restrictions to the growth of civil society are clarified and the necessary roles that could be played by public agencies, in order to bring to fruition projects determined by local communities, may be defined in greater detail. In sum, the most effective policy development emerges from lessons gained from the experience of community participation in development.